

ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON PAGE E-3

NEW YORK TIMES  
11 APRIL 1982

# Questions and Answers on the Military Balance in Europe

By LESLIE H. GELB

**T**HE growth of the Soviet nuclear weapons arsenal to "parity" with the United States is contributing to a basic re-evaluation of NATO military strategy. Central to this strategy over the years was the presumption that the United States would be prepared to use nuclear weapons first in the event of an overwhelming Soviet conventional attack. As long as the United States was generally believed to have nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union, the threat of using nuclear weapons first was rarely challenged. But now all that is changing. Arguments that were once academic — over whether Washington would actually use these weapons and risk general nuclear war — are becoming of immediate and real importance.

Last week, these issues, long debated by the experts, broke into general public view. Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig Jr. already busy fending off a Congressional resolution for a nuclear weapons freeze, strongly upheld traditional NATO doctrine against criticism by four former senior officials. The four argued that it was time to move toward abandoning what they considered a suicidal commitment by the United States to use nuclear weapons first, if necessary. The threat, they said, was no longer credible and to maintain this doctrine could only "add to the risk of nuclear war" and an all-out nuclear exchange. The four were Robert S. McNamara, former Secretary of Defense, and McGeorge Bundy, White House national security adviser in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations; George F. Kennan, former Ambassador to Moscow, and Gerard C. Smith, former director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and President Nixon's lead weapons negotiator.

The feasibility of this no-first-use doctrine depends directly on whether NATO is in a position to defend itself against a non-nuclear attack with conventional forces alone, that is, without resort to nuclear weapons. Mr. Haig said NATO was not in such a position, which helps explain why Moscow can afford to take the nuclear pledge not to fire first. Advocates in the West of a no-first-use policy, he said, "seldom go on to propose that the United States reintroduce the draft, triple the size of its armed forces and put its economy on a wartime footing." He argued that these steps would be necessary to counterbalance "the Soviet conventional advantages and geopolitical position in Europe."

Reagan Administration and other military experts in Washington believe the Russians know they would have to pay an extremely high price if they attacked and that they could not be confident of the outcome. But the experts clearly do not feel comfortable with the balance of conventional forces between NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger, in his budget presentation to Congress, concluded that "the quality of NATO's deterrent posture has weakened in recent years, and an accelerated U.S. and allied force improvement effort is needed if NATO is to retain a viable initial defense capability during the 1980's." Pentagon officials say this means that right now, NATO could withstand the Warsaw Pact threat but after a week or so

Harold Brown, Defense Secretary in the Carter Administration, said in a recent interview, "the Soviets have to have doubts about a successful attack, but not as many as I would like them to have." But he added that NATO forces were in better shape than at any time since the mid-1960's. Although the Warsaw Pact was ahead, he said, the correlation of forces is "either level or changing in our direction."

Continuing a longstanding budgetary pattern, more than half the \$1.6 trillion the Reagan Administration proposes to spend for defense in the next five years would be for NATO. What is the preponderance of opinion on what all this money has bought and what it will buy?

## Doesn't the Soviet Union far outspend the United States?

The Central Intelligence Agency estimates that in 1980, the Soviet Union spent \$175 billion on military forces, 50 percent more than the United States. Both sides spent the bulk of these funds on the European theater. The C.I.A. comparison is measured in dollars which, experts agree, overstates the Soviet figure because the salaries of low-paid Soviet troops are computed in terms of much higher American servicemen's pay. Nonetheless, almost all experts agree that Moscow has been outspending Washington for conventional forces in Europe by \$10 billion to \$30 billion a year during the last decade.

But this comparison leaves out allied expenditures on both sides. The International Institute of Strategic Studies in London reports that Moscow's Warsaw Pact allies collectively spend \$20 billion to \$30 billion per year, while America's NATO allies spend \$100 billion. Thus, NATO outspent the Warsaw Pact in the 1970's by several hundred billion dollars. When allied or friendly nations in the Far East are added, the West's margin of "spending superiority" is even wider.

It is also true, however, that Moscow gets more for its money. Manpower in Eastern Europe is much cheaper than in the West, and all its allies use Soviet-made major arms and equipment. NATO tolerates enormous duplication of effort, with several countries producing their own aircraft, tanks and other arms. NATO spends more, but for political and economic reasons having little to do with security, the East gets more bang for the buck.

## Does this translate into Warsaw Pact military superiority?

The experts say yes. The Warsaw Pact leads NATO in numbers of virtually all kinds of weapons, often by margins of two-to-one or greater. The gaps are particularly striking in tactical aircraft, tanks, antitank missile launchers, artillery and air defense guns. Taking quality into account mitigates the picture somewhat. NATO aircraft generally stay in the air longer and carry more payload. NATO tactical planes, for example, carry three to

CONTINUED